

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
June 7, 2005

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Chair, J. Hilt.

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Hilt, S. Kroes, T. Russo, A. Brown S. Thompson, L. Spataro

MEMBERS ABSENT: T. Bosma, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Fitzpatrick, D. Leafers

OTHERS PRESENT: D. LaBrenz, City of Muskegon Inspection Department; M. Ortiz, 362 W. Muskegon; B. Jacobson, HDC Construction; L. Maycroft, Hooker DeJong Architects; J. Elsey, Neighborhood Investment Corp.; D. Jensen 533 W. Western; P. Babbitt, 521 W. Western

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 3, 2005 was made by S. Kroese, supported by A. Brown and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Case 2005-15 1194 Sixth Street – Request to demolish house. Applicant: City of Muskegon Inspection Department. District: Houston. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. The City Inspection Department had been preparing to demolish the structure at 1194 Sixth Street. They recently realized it was in a Historic District and would require HDC approval. HDC guidelines generally recommend against demolition; however, review of the file showed that the structure does not contribute to the district, and the home appears to have significant damage. Staff recommends approval of the request.

S. Kroese stated she drove by the house and it appeared to be in bad shape. D. LaBrenz discussed the background on the demolition case up to this point, and apologized for overlooking HDC approval. He stated this process started about a year and a half ago. The City had received many complaints about this structure, and the homeowners had ceased all communication with the City.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to demolish the house at 1194 Sixth Street, was made by S. Kroese, supported by S. Thompson and unanimously approved.

Case 2005-16 1342 Peck Street – Request to install siding. Applicant: Steve Rone. District: McLaughlin. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. Applicant wishes to install vinyl siding on
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the house at 1342 Peck Street. Siding will be of the same color and size as the existing wood siding. In cases in Class A districts where the repair or replacement with like materials is impractical, or where it can be demonstrated that the original materials will no longer hold paint, or that the original materials are so badly deteriorated that they can no longer be reasonably repaired, the residing standards below shall strictly be adhered to:

(a) any installation of residing materials shall simulate the appearance of the original building material that it is intended to cover. This simulation shall take into account the size, shape or profile, texture, and linear direction of the original building material. The residing material shall be similar in appearance and dimension to the original siding. The exposure to the weather of the new siding shall range within one inch of the nominal dimension of the original siding. The Historic District Commission shall have the authority to waive this requirement in the event that they believe a different design or dimension siding would be more appropriate to the architectural character of the Historic District.

HDC has previously allowed vinyl siding in single-A districts and HDC guidelines permit such residing. Staff recommends approval of the request, with the provision that none of the existing decorative woodwork is removed. S. Thompson asked what decorative woodwork there was on the house. J. Fitzpatrick stated there was some up above, around the soffits.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install vinyl siding the same color and size as the existing siding on the house located at 1342 Peck, with the condition that none of the existing decorative woodwork be removed, was made by T. Russo, supported by S. Kroese and unanimously approved.

L. Spataro arrived at 4:08 p.m.

Case 2005-17 362 W. Muskegon Avenue – Request to construct garage. Applicant: Millie Ortiz. District: Houston. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. Applicant would like to construct a garage behind her home at 362 W. Muskegon. Applicant stated the garage would be sided the same as the house. New construction is permitted in historic districts. New structures should be in keeping with the existing historical character of the neighborhood... with a design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the surrounding buildings and landscaping. J. Fitzpatrick provided members with drawings of the garage. T. Russo stated the garage roof in the drawing appeared to be higher than normal. M. Ortiz stated it would not be, as they had a deck off the second floor of the house and did not want the garage to block their view. A. Brown asked if the garage would be accessed from the alley. M. Ortiz stated yes. J. Hilt asked where the garage would be, in relation to the stone house. M. Ortiz stated it would be on the opposite side. J. Hilt asked what type of siding would be used. M. Ortiz stated the same that is on the house.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a new garage to be sided the same as the house, located at 362 W. Muskegon Ave. was made by A. Brown, supported by T. Russo and unanimously approved.

Case 2005-18 600 W. Clay Avenue (Boilerworks) – Request to approve changes to exterior plan including bricking in windows. Applicant: Boilerworks, LLC. District: Boilerworks. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. Changes were made to the exterior plans of the building

which were not approved by the HDC. This includes the bricking in of windows on the south and west sides of the building. The most recent plan is included in the packet. Regardless of the consistency or inconsistency with the original intent of the HDC, the revised plans should have come before the HDC. At this time the applicant is requesting approval of the revised plan. Muskegon HDC guidelines state that “No exterior doors, windows, or exterior woodwork shall be altered, removed, relocated, or added without HDC approval. Secretary of the Interior Standards: Not recommended: Changing the number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows, through cutting new openings, blocking in windows, and installing replacement sash which does not fit the historic window opening”. Staff has talked to Robbert McKay at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and they have approved the bricking in of the windows. He stated he felt it was appropriate due to the interior configuration of the new use. It is staff’s opinion that the changes to the south side of the building are minor, and consistent with the intent of the HDC’s original approval. However, the changes to the windows on the west side of the building are not consistent with the original intent of the approved plans. Staff recommends approval of the exterior changes to the south side of the building, but recommends denial of the request to alter the west side of the structure. Staff has had several discussions with the developer, architect, and the State Historic Preservation Office. The State office had no problem with the changes as far as tax credits, but the final decision rests with the local HDC.

S. Kroes asked how the builders came to the decision to brick in the windows. B. Jacobson stated that when the original request to the HDC was approved, it was for preliminary plans. After work on the building began, they ended up with stairwells in places they had not originally planned, and this necessitated the change in window design. He stated that the changes were submitted to and approved by the State, but were inadvertently not forwarded to the HDC. L. Spataro stated that the original HDC motion on the Boilerworks building specifically stated that the original openings were to be preserved; there was no mention of any windows being bricked in. He has had lengthy correspondence with the SHPO on this issue, and the local HDC can be more restrictive than what the State allows. L. Spataro submitted e-mail correspondence from Robbert McKay of the SHPO. B. Jacobson stated that whenever you start renovating a 100+ year-old building, you never know what problems you might encounter, so plans sometimes change. L. Maycroft stated that one of the suggestions made by R. McKay had already been addressed, that being the recessed brick in the windows in question. A. Brown stated that the central windows on the west wall seemed to be the main concern. L. Spataro concurred. L. Maycroft suggested spandrel or glass windows, but that glass windows would show the wall shadow, making them appear a different tint. S. Kroes thought that either option would give the appearance of a full window.

A motion that the masonry infill on the two central windows of the western façade be removed, and that it be replaced with spandrel or other window unit at the discretion of the architect was made by L. Spataro, supported by A. Brown and unanimously approved, with discussion continuing.

S. Thompson asked why the new brick was a different color. J. Fitzpatrick stated the idea was to have it stand out to show that it was not part of the original structure. L. Maycroft stated that her firm has had a staff change since this project started so she wasn’t sure why this particular color brick was chosen. L. Spataro asked if there was an intent to clean the exterior of the building. L. Maycroft stated they would like to, but it’s difficult to do. L. Spataro asked that any future changes in plans be brought to the HDC. B. Jacobson stated he would do that, and this issue was just an oversight.

WALK-ONS

Case 2005-19 1173 Fourth Street – Request to install vinyl siding. J. Elsey stated that NIC is in the process of rehabbing this structure for the applicant, R. Enders. She stated that a lead-based paint risk assessment was done and high levels of lead were found. Applicants have children and would like HDC approval to put siding on the house to encapsulate it. L. Spataro stated there were a lot of architectural features that could not be covered with siding. J. Elsey stated those areas would be scraped and painted by hand. No design features would be covered up. She also stated that they were planning to replace some windows. J. Hilt asked what type of windows they were looking at. J. Elsey stated they haven't gotten bids back yet. J. Hilt asked what district the house was in. J. Fitzpatrick stated single A. J. Elsey provided a list of renovations that were planned for the house. L. Spataro read the list of planned exterior work items to the members. He asked if the HDC was being asked to approve the entire list or just the siding. J. Hilt stated she would prefer to address only the siding at this time, since there was incomplete information on the other items.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install vinyl siding on the house at 1173 4th St. with the condition that all decorative woodwork be scraped and painted by hand, was made by S. Kroese, supported by A. Brown, and unanimously approved.

Case 2005-20 545 W. Western Avenue (Babbitt Garden) – Discussion of appropriate treatment for side of building. J. Fitzpatrick provided members with some background information. A request to paint faux windows on the side of this building was denied by the HDC at a previous meeting. Owner P. Babbitt would like further discussion of the project. She stated there were actual windows there at one time, but they were bricked in decades ago. She would like to paint faux windows on the wall with painted iron balconies overlooking the garden to be built on the property she owns next door. L. Spataro stated that the building and garden were two separate issues and the HDC must consider just the building. He stated that if windows were painted on the building, he would want them to look like the original windows that were there. He asked if the original windows had balconies, as depicted on the faux painting. P. Babbitt stated no, because there was no garden there before. D. Jensen stated she didn't know what the original windows looked like. P. Babbitt stated the pictures in the library don't show that side of the building. L. Spataro stated a style from that era would suffice. P. Babbitt and D. Jensen stated they would do some research to see what they could find. No motion was made on this issue.

OLD BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Walk-On Policy J. Hilt wanted to discuss the HDC's walk-on policy. She felt that hearing walk-on cases did not give members enough time to review the information and make informed decisions. J. Fitzpatrick stated it didn't give staff time to prepare either. He stated the earlier walk-on case of 1173 Fourth St. was a good example. At the meeting there were other items

brought up that were not part of the original request. L. Spataro felt that it was alright to discuss cases on a walk-on basis, but not to vote on them.

A motion that the HDC no longer accept walk-on cases that require HDC action, and only hear those requesting discussion or advice was made by L. Spataro, supported by S. Kroese and unanimously approved.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m. by J. Hilt.

dml